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SUBJECT: LIBERIA RESPONSE TO DOL ON CHILD LABOR REPORTING

REF: 09 STATE 131997; 09 MONROVIA 91

1) Ref A requests post's comment on DOL's draft list of goods that ILAB has reason to believe are produced by child or forced labor. For Liberia, the report cites the use of child labor in the production of diamonds and rubber. Post renews its concerns, expressed in Ref B, that the report does not account for the activities that the GOL has taken to reduce child labor.

2) Ref A also requests information on child labor not related to the production of goods.

2A: Acute poverty and a minimal formal economy force many children in Liberia to work in order to help support their families. Children are employed in many sectors, including street vending and domestic service. The GOL does not collect specific data on child labor.

2B: There were no new laws on child labor, though the National Children's Act is pending before the Senate for the 2010 session. President Sirleaf also announced that the Decent Work Bill will soon be submitted to the Legislature for consideration. The current laws, when enforced, are adequate to deal with exploitive child labor.

2C: Two agencies are responsible for child labor, the Child Labor Commission (CLC) of the Ministry of Labor and the Women and Children Protection Section (WACPS) of the Liberia National Police under the Ministry of Justice. There are few mechanisms for cooperation between the two sections. The CLC has no inspectors and relies on the International Rescue Committee (IRC) for field investigations. WACPS has 245 investigators, but they are mainly trained in women's issues, not child labor and do not do field investigations. However, when a situation comes to the attention of investigators, usually in relation to a related emergency such as destitution, they attempt to provide assistance and resolve the emergency. There were no prosecutions for child labor offenses reported by WACPS in 2009.

2D: Child trafficking is also handled by WACPS, which in 2009 dealt with eight abandoned children, 22 runaways, and 31 missing. They brought one case for trafficking before the courts. There was a trafficking hotline maintained by an NGO, but it is now out of service.

2E: There is no governmental policy to address exploitive child labor in Liberia.

2F: There are no governmental social programs specifically designed to prevent and withdraw a child from labor. The GOL does conduct awareness raising campaigns on child labor. They also encourage parents to send their children to school and co-operates with NGOs on children's issues. WFP, with \$3.5 million funded by USAID, maintains a school feeding program designed to support over 300,000 primary school children. The IRC just completed a four-year DOL grant to promote education for 15,000 children.

2G: In general, the situation on child labor remained consistent in Liberia. The GOL relies on NGOs like IRC and UNICEF for many services. Semah Tegli, Acting National Coordinator of the CLC told poloff that his commission is paralyzed and lacks capacity, and looks forward to a partnership that would vet and train investigators. Neither CLC nor WACPS had a budget for training investigators for child labor, but both expressed the need and desire for assistance.  
ROBINSON